

Early schools of Minnesota /

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EARLY SCHOOLS OF MINNESOTA. BY D. A. J. BAKER.

For an account of the schools previous to the year 1850, I am indebted to the Rev. Mr. Williamson of Kaposia, and Mr. Ely of this city. Those schools were connected with the Missions established at different periods and were attended mostly by the Indians and mixed races which then composed the greater part of the population. The first of which I can learn, was at Sandy Lake in 1832, and taught by Mr. F. Ayer , followed by Mr. E. F. Ely . During the winter of 1833, Rev. W. T. Boutwell , taught at Leach Lake, and the next year the Mission was opened which continued till 1838. In 1834, Mr. Ely commenced a school at Fond du Lac, which continued till the spring of 1839. From 1836 to 1846, there was a Mission school at Pokagoma, taught by Mr. Ayer , Mrs. Seymour , and Mr. Ely . In 1835 also, Miss Sarah Poage commenced a school at Lac qua Parle, and in December of that year, Rev. Mr. Williamson commenced teaching in the Dakota language. In 1836 Mr. S. W. Pond commenced teaching at Lake Harriet near Fort Snelling.

In 1837, Rev. David Kings opened a school at Kaposia but it was broken up, and in 1839, a boarding school was started there, of which Mr. Amos Jones was teacher. Mrs. Martha Boardman was afterwards associated with him. In the following year there was a school at Red Rock. About this time, Mrs. Persis Denton , taught at Red Wing, and in 1842, 5 82 Mrs. L. C. Gaine taught at the mouth of the St. Croix. In the latter year a Mission school was opened at Red Lake by Rev. Mr. Ayers , which I understand yet continues under Rev. Mr. Waight and Dr. Lewis , also schools were established at Cass Lake, and Little Winnepeg; by Rev. Messrs. Barnard and Spencer . Miss J. S. Williamson is teaching a Dakota and English school at Kaposia, which she commenced in '46 or '47. The attendance at these schools was and is small, varying from 5 to 25, and many of them,

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who have attended, have never learned to speak the English language. Yet, that much good has been, and is still being accomplished by them, cannot be doubted.

In 1847, Miss H. E. Bishop commenced the first select school in St. Paul, which she continued till the fall of 1850. She may be considered as the pioneer in teaching an English school of English speaking pupils, and much praise is due to her perseverance under many discouragements.

Miss Scofield followed in 1849 and taught in St. Paul, till the fall of 1850. Both these teachers came, I believe, under the patronage of Gov. Slade . In 1848 Miss Hosford , now the lady of H. L. Moss , Esq., commenced a select school at Stillwater; though I am told that previous to that, a Miss Greenleaf had taught at intervals. Mr. L. B. Wait followed in the summer of 1849. At Point Douglass J. H. Craig opened a school, in January 1850; he taught in a large building, and had about thirty scholars through the winter; since that, they have continued to have a private school at that place. At St. Anthony a school was opened in 1849, by Miss Backus under the direction of Gov. Slade . In the summer of 1850 Mr. Upton taught a school. In the fall of 1850, two district schools were organized, and teachers employed, attendance large. Rev. Mr. Hobart taught the first male school in St. Paul in the winter of '49, using 83 the Methodist church for a school room. Average number in attendance, 30.

In July, '50, D. A. J. Baker commenced a school. Average number, thirty; second term forty. October, '50, the first school in the Territory was organized under the statute, in District No. 2 in St Paul, D. A. J. Baker , teacher. The school, thus far has averaged eighty-five scholars; whole number in attendance one hundred and five. The district owns a convenient house; it was furnished by the Secretary of the Territory with outline maps, globes, &c. The citizens are now making arrangements to establish an Institution, to be under the direction of the Trustees of the District.

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In District No. 3, Mr. Doolittle commenced the first District school in November. Average number, thirty five. The studies, pursued in the schools up to this time, have been mostly English. Pupils have been thus far learning the spelling book, the key of all knowledge. The Legislature of '49 provided the Territory with a free school law, which in its ample provisions and conciseness of language compares favorably with any of the East. There can be no doubt that by its provisions, it will place education within the reach of all its youth.

St Paul , 1851.